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Mental Discipline and Educational Values. By W. H. HECK. New York: John Lane & Co., 1909. Pp. 147.

The aim of this book is to bring together and critically discuss the evidence for and against the doctrine of formal discipline and to put his conclusions in such form that they may be brought to bear on school practice. In spite of the disclaimer of any finality in the conclusions which is made in the introduction the author comes to rather positive conclusions such as the following: "The theories of localization [of brain function] now accepted are sufficient in themselves to disprove the doctrine of formal discipline" (p. 88). On the basis of his theoretic conclusions the author holds that educational values are entirely intrinsic and utilitarian.

The earlier part of the book gives a very excellent summary of the observations and experiments which have a bearing on the question of formal discipline and brings out the factors which must be borne in mind in considering the significance of these experiments and facts. For example, apparent transfer may be due to native difference in mental ability or to natural advancement in maturity. This summary lays the experimental facts before the reader in a clear manner and enables him if he so desires to pursue the matter in more detail by consulting the sources.

The next chapter discusses the localization of brain function and reaches the conclusion already indicated. The process of reasoning from data to conclusion is not entirely clear, however. The fact established is that the centers governing the movement of restricted groups of muscles are localized in well-defined areas of the brain. But when this small item of knowledge is compared with our wide ignorance of brain functions—for example, in the so-called association areas—it would seem that we are as much if not more justified in inferring from the mental to the physiological as the reverse.

While denying the validity of the notion of formal discipline the author admits a certain kind of transfer or extension of practice effects. This takes place only through the formation of a "concept of method." Practice may go on without effecting this formation, in which case it is merely a special ability that is trained. Or the "understanding of methods" is often gained at school without ability to use them. The degree of general effect then varies with the manner in which the material is utilized. Specifically the material is to be treated according to the manner of the five "formal steps."

Some of the discussion in this section is rather obscure, as, for example, the sentence which is quoted with approval from Hoose, "Form in mental activity means that peculiar activity which the mind exerts when it does any particular thing, or thinks any particular thought or word." This sounds like the type of psychological discussion one had thought past. The question may in general be raised whether discussions of this subject do not fail to reach common ground because of the obscurity of the expression "formal discipline" and of differences in the notion of what transference refers to, e.g., transference from one mental process to another or from one sort of material to another.

If this contribution to the subject does not clear up all the difficulties in it, it may be recommended as setting forth the various aspects of the problem in for the most part clear fashion and is therefore to be recommended for class reference or individual reading.

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